

Dear Ways and Means Committee

My name is Sylvia Randolph I have a Bachelor's degree in Liberal studies (psychology, sociology, urban development). I am currently in school for my MA in Public Policy. I also have professional development credits from several higher educational institutions. I have a long professional work history with experience in managing different components of the daily operating programs.

My most recent work consisted of researching and analyzing women and children issues in public policy with the National Organization for Women. Areas such as social security and wealth disparities amongst women, additionally, health care and education, as well as doing some project management for the National Women's Conference. I have also been influential in the passing of several legislative laws in the state of Maryland around issues of women children and families the past 2 years I have volunteered my time with congressional legislators, the Governor's Office and community programs addressing issues in Maryland's foster care, reunification and adoption program.

I am currently working in the field of Government Relations Public Policy on a special interest project around women and children's families; family law, education, finance and health care. The current project addresses the need of new legislation and policy that supports women and children in our court systems specifically foster care and adoption. At this time my research finds that although the federal government has legislation that supports the family environment legal, sociological and financial stand point, many states have failed to up hold and or successfully implement them into their own state legislation. For example the education law where the states are to assist children who are in foster care with some from higher education or career development and or training. Yet we find statistically that children are aging out of the system unskilled and unemployed where homelessness becomes their factor of life.

My question at the onset of my research looked at the dichotomy between federal and state legislation. I purposed my position on the matter that federal law should be and take precedence in the development or writing of state laws and that there is no room for subjection or juxtaposing the federal legislation in order for the states purpose and goals via it's courts and judicial setting. Second I have found the relationship between the legal judicial and departments are lacking in the inclusive and concrete practices. Although the language and the meaning provided by the federal government substantiate the practices in the courts we find that the lawyers and the departments are far reached in the area.

I looked over the past years academic syllabus the Children Advocacy Program (CAP) is perfect the courses as well as the guest speakers addressed the areas of my project most specifically how do we begin to address the needed changes in the legislative venue of the child advocacy and what that should look like for purpose of the working in the field.

I would like to offer Harvard's CAP program the chance to know face to face what law looks like in relation to women, children and families. In doing so, knowing the importance and relevance in consideration of legislative law and how that not only affects the families but the system as a whole. Understanding the difference between the family law procedural mandates vs. the Departments agenda and how the judicial system is the so to speak moderator of the combined. I would like to offer the program a case study that will give examples of how often times many issues that arrive through the systematic daily operations are often left out or ignored, that families are left in the system for the moderators to then set decisions over. We will find that in the worst case of all scenarios children are dying at the hands of the system. The day of the overworked case workers are gone amended legislation and new reporting systems have addressed that yet we still today find this as a major issue. More children than ever are suffering as a result of a failed system. Lawyers are at the will of stated departments; there only justification for representation is to follow what in the best interest of the system rather than the child or family.

As the students emerge from the CAP program what they will find is that there is disconnect between the purpose and events of time as it relates to children. That such federal agencies and the Children's Bureau no longer have an augmented purpose but has become another name in the federal Government. The briefings, testimonies, and hearings around children that impact the changes in child legislation remain unheard and therefore by those in these positions both on the state and federal level. The lawyers that I have met and talked with along with state government workers are unaware of the changes and that poses a great threat to the system as a whole. The goal of the my project is to ensure that there are changes made full circle in the system that points in the direction of the true advocacy in the future as we move forward.

Thank You,

Sylvia Randolph